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# NURSING IN MISSION STATIONS



## CHINA, THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY

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Late Superintendent of the Illinois Training School for Nurses

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Two institutions that we visited may be mentioned in this connection: orphanages, one maintained by a municipality, one, by private subscription. They are both regarded as novel experiments in China, and the purpose in each case is most commendable, namely, saving the girl babies, and discouraging infanticide, a crime shockingly common in that country. But the horror of those orphanages will not soon be forgotten. Such mouldy, musty, dark rooms, such rags and dirt, such frowsy and incompetent old women the sole caretakers of these poor scraps of humanity, spared to a fate little less cruel than death itself! What a work was there for some devoted women in the saving of China's unwelcome girl babies, and putting about them something of the mother-love and care that are every baby's birthright! Surely, looking over the situation in China thoughtfully, every nurse zealous for the good works of her profession must thrill at the prospect of what well-organized nursing service might accomplish in this vast, unexplored field, where every city in the country offers such unusual opportunities: visiting and school nurses, nurses who are specialists in infant welfare, and tuberculosis, and in all the problems of the poor that count for health and respectability and comfort. Teaching the people better things has been begun in the schools of the missionaries, and one visible evidence always of the leaven of Christianity is the greater cleanliness and better mode of living. These Chinese boys and girls, this young blood of China so quick and eager, will shortly be, each of them, a centre of good example and influence. If such good influences could only be supplemented and enforced by the practical work of the nurse in the field, what transformations might not one confidently look for?

A third question: Does China desire such assistance? If you put the question to the people who most need help, no doubt you will get as prompt and emphatic a refusal as the visiting nurse frequently encounters in the wholly new field. And in the Old China there would

have been no other answer. But in China, the New Republic, anxious to shake off the old traditions and to get away from the old order of things, there is a new spirit that is significant and auspicious. No more China the Empire with its superstitions and hide bound customs that paralyzed all independent action, and hindered every good cause, but China the Republic, that whatever her present strength and stability, is reaching out for better things, and for the first time is recognizing that prominent among the problems one must undertake for her respect abroad and her own preservation are these relating to the public health and welfare. Furthermore, in the solution of these problems, and the planning and organization incident thereto, does any one doubt but that China will turn to our country for assistance, as she does in others of her difficulties, knowing we are truly her friends? May we not fail her now, in this great necessity!

In a town of 150,000 inhabitants, on the Yangtze River, we were recently privileged to attend a meeting quite out of the ordinary in China, the immediate purpose of which was the amalgamation of several ante-revolutionary societies into one large union, whose aim should be the loyal support of the New Republic, and all relating to the public welfare. The meeting was representative of the city's best and included besides various high officials, many business men, scholars, and teachers. Naturally, some of the old régime, still in the clutches of century-old traditions, were conservative. But it was with an unheard-of freedom of speech (for China), a courage and liberty born with the Republic, that these new problems of making China better were discussed and emphasized; the necessity of the people actually doing that which would make their government and people better in every way than the old China had ever thought or cared to be. They spoke without reserve of China's dirt and smells, of her hordes of beggars, of her uncared-for indigent and helpless and sick, of her unsanitary houses and streets, and of her bad roads. And they urged the necessity of "doing it now." Could one realizing somewhat of China's needs for its poor and helpless have heard only the speech of the president, a masterly presentation of the country's conditions and necessities, she must have felt at once that with but one such champion at her back she could confidently go forth to cope with all the powers of disease and darkness. And certainly hearing the speeches of that one meeting she must feel that China wants to be made better, and needs but to see the first small fruit of endeavor to insure to the worker, thenceforth, the most hearty appreciation, co-operation, and support.

Another feature most encouraging to the work of the nurse in China

is China's attitude to women—the recognition by the strong men of the country that in the making of the New China the women and their work are needed. Hence a woman prominent in the suffrage movement in China, Miss Seng, was given place in the Republic's first birthday anniversary program, at Wuchang, city of its birth. Another Chinese woman, Dr. Mary Stone, was a speaker at the National Red Cross meeting, in Shanghai, recently, and was most vigorously applauded in all she said concerning China's need of the women in this, as in others of the country's interests. Two women, one Chinese, one American, were asked to speak at the "village improvement" society, previously referred to. And China will gratefully give you women who are workers for the public good a field for your helpful endeavors as vast as you desire and are able to develop.

To the help of this great and needy people what a pity indeed if there are few or none to respond. As the opportunities are beyond estimation so also will be the reward! May not the next decade produce from among our numbers a goodly company of women, strong in works and in character, who shall have in the making of the New China a glorious and incontestable part!

One word as to the spiritual qualifications, since this aspect of the case has been more or less under discussion. Preacher and evangelist the nurse need not be, but she certainly needs for this great work a Christian faith that will carry her through the darkest of difficulties, a Christian grace that is always conspicuous and that always attracts to the Christ whose influence in the lives and thought of these darkly heathen folk is, after all, far more to be desired than the mere relieving of their physical necessities.

NOTE.—"At the meeting of the China Medical Missionary Association which was held in January, in Peking, a committee was appointed to co-operate with the nurses' association just organized, and there was a very general opinion that every hospital should have a foreign-trained nurse in charge."—Extract from a letter written to Miss Hay by Dr. Johnson, vice-president of China Medical Missionary Association.